

EPHESIANS 1:10
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 20, July 24, 1999

INTRO: Ephesians 1:10. What a phenomenal verse of Scripture! If you will not be able to believe all I have to say this morning, I will not blame you. If you will say, "This is too incredible to believe", then I will understand. I am even a little reluctant this morning to share what I believe this verse contains. But for those of you going through difficult times, maybe these fantastic thoughts will encourage you to push on. May God use this message to that end.

In the last message we saw that God has made known to us the mystery of His will. This mystery, as I understand it, is the fact that God would make one body of both Jew and Gentile (Col. 1:24-26). It was a mystery because it was not known nor even knowable because it had never yet been revealed even in the OT that God would make of both Jew and Gentile one body, the Christian Church. One can study from Genesis through Malachi and never once find mention of this great truth. But now the initiated, or the Christian, can understand what God planned from before creation. The Church of Jesus Christ plays a major role in God's eternal plan. It is so that in the fullness of the times He (God) might head up all things in Christ through the Church, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

f. God will make us administrators in Christ (1:10)

Now in verse 10 we have a word that is unfamiliar to most of us. It is the word, *dispensation*, at least it is so translated in the KJV and the NKJV. The Greek word is *oikonomia*. Now there are two views of this word. It may refer to an administration or stewardship or a dispensation. An *oikonomos* was a steward of another person's household. The Greek word for house is *oikos* and an *oikonomos* was a householder or steward. Lloyd Jones says, "How do we know which of its two meanings to adopt?....If you regard the word from the former standpoint (the person who is in authority) its meaning is a plan, a

scheme, an economy; if from the latter (the standpoint of the person under authority) then it is a stewardship or an administration (1:198).

The use of the word *oikonomia* as a stewardship is clear to us (Luke 16:1-2, stewardship, *oikonomia*; steward *oikonomos*). So an *oikonomia* is a person set in charge over another persons household or goods.

When *oikonomia* is viewed from the perspective of the one in authority it takes on a slightly different meaning which we call a dispensation. But what is a dispensation? I illustrate the meaning of a dispensation from the lumber industry. My dad moved to BC from Swift Current Saskatchewan in the 40's. It did not take too long until he was sawing lumber. Now in my dad's earlier days the sawmill was moved into the woods and logs were skidded to the sawmill by horses. After the lumber was cut it was hauled to town where it was dried and planed and then sold. In those days there were little sawmills all over the country. Well, that was the system for some years but eventually it became more economical to have the sawmill in a permanent place, preferably close to town and the logs were loaded onto trucks and then hauled to town for milling. That is the system still used. Those are two dispensations in the sawmilling business. They are two different ways of doing things. The end result is the same; lumber, ready for use in building. But the way it is done has changed.

Now we come to a major decision: which of the two uses of *oikonomia* is meant in this passage? After many hours of tedious study I have concluded that the evidence for *stewardship* (adverbial acc. of reference or respect; so Wuest and Darby) outweighs the view of it as a *dispensation*.

After much studying I did my own translation from the Greek text and this is how I would

translate verses 9-10, "...having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself with respect to (Ellicott and Darby also translate it *for*) the stewardship of the fulness of the times to head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heaven and the things on earth."

My conclusion with regard to this word *oikonomia* is that it refers to the stewardship or administration of the fulness of the times. Let me sum up from verse 7 to here. We have redemption in Christ according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence by making known to us the mystery of His will, which is the Church of Jesus Christ. He planned the Church for the stewardship of the fulness of the times. Wow!

But that brings us to another big question: what is the fulness of the times? Let us consider the word *times* first. The Greek word is *chronos* from which we get chronology. It has our usual meaning of time. But it is in the plural meaning that the whole of time can be divided into smaller time units. These smaller time units are what we usually refer to as dispensations. So I would take the thought of dispensations from the word *times* rather than from the word *oikonomia*.

To understand dispensationalism is a major study all its own. Some swear by it and some swear at it. But I think that even from our text we can see that the whole of time is divided into smaller time units. This study has caused me to begin a deeper study into the matter of the Biblical terminology of ages, times and seasons. I do believe that God's plan for mankind has segments of times which some theologians call dispensations.

You see, with regard to God's plan for man there are various times. Now people differ on this matter of dispensations or times. On July

the 7th. of this year we travelled from Prince Rupert to the Queen Charlotte Islands by ferry. It is a 6-7 hour trip if the weather is good and it was. I had opportunity to talk to a number of people on our way across. One of those was an electrician at the airport on the Islands. He happened to attend a certain church off and of which I knew the pastor. Now this man was a very mixed up man spiritually. He told me his name was Bob Scofield and that name gave me opportunity to get into a spiritual conversation with him. There was a man by name of C.I. Scofield who became a very popular Bible teacher. From him we have the Scofield reference Bible. Well C.I. Scofield held to the view that there were seven dispensations in God's plan for mankind.

The clearest example of a difference in time periods is the difference between the OT and the NT. The contrast of these two sections of time is so great that some have concluded that in the OT people were saved by keeping the law and in the NT salvation is by grace through faith. Let me say this about dispensationalism: the common denominator MUST always be that salvation is by grace through faith. What is different in each dispensation is how people are brought to salvation.

So, now that we understand a little more of the Biblical concept of the times or dispensations we come to another important question in our text. What time is the *fulness* of the times? ([Leave out following if pressed for time] I might add here that the phrase *fulness of the times* occurs only here in Scripture. Some have erroneously felt that the phrase *fulness of time* in Galatians 4:4 is a reference to the same time as we have here (read Gal. 4:4). Galatians 4:4 refers to time singular while Ephesians 1:10 speaks of the *fulness of the times*. Galatians 4:4 refers to the arrival of a certain preplanned time. Ephesians 1:10 refers to a certain time period among other time periods. Our question is,

which time period is the fulness of the times or dispensations?)

Well we are in the time period called the Church age. This time period is not yet complete. Immediately following the Church age is the tribulation time period. It is a period of 7 years. Following the tribulation is the 1000 year reign of Christ. After this is eternity, the time of the new heaven and the new earth. Our question is which of those time periods will the Church be given to administer?

That leads us to consider yet another word in our text. It is the word translated in the NKJV as, "...He might gather together in one..." Those six words are one word in the Greek text. It is the word *anakephalaiousasthai* (Inf. mid.). The *ana* at the beginning of this word means either *again* or *up* and thus means *to head up* or *to head again*. From another reference (Rom. 13:9) where the same word is used I conclude that it means to head up. It is a time when God will head up all things by Jesus Christ. Now, in which future time period does God head up all things by Jesus Christ with the Church as steward or administrator? I think the only time period that suits this description is the millennium, a time period in which Christ will rule here on earth for a thousand years. Now, lest you think this time period is far removed from us, it is possible that this time period is only a little more than seven years away. When the tribulation begins, the millennium is only seven years away!

If all my conclusions are correct thus far then there is revealed in this text a truth so incredible that words simply fail to express the magnitude of this revelation. For, then God planned the Church with the purpose in mind that she is to administer or have stewardship of the world during the time period of the millennium! God will then head up all things by Jesus Christ through the

Church! That means that you and I, as true believers, will administer the government of the millennium! I wonder if you can believe this?

Let me show you first of all that Jesus Christ will be the governing head during this time period. Familiar verses for us from Christmas times are Isaiah 9:6-7 (Read and comment). Now a government has department heads or ministers over the various departments. Turn with me now to Jesus' own words in Matthew 19:28 as to who some of these governing heads will be (read). The time of regeneration, in my understanding, can be none other than the millennium. So, we have the governing Head, the Lord Jesus Christ and the department heads of all the Jewish peoples. These twelve are also the foundation of the Christian Church (Eph. 3:19-22).

[[Speculation: Now if God chose 12 Jews to administer the Jewish nation, is it possible that 12 Gentiles will administer the Gentile nations? Could these be the 24 elders of Revelation?]]

But what about us? I am not yet exactly sure of the timing of 1 Corinthians 6:1-3 (read). But it seems to me that it must be during the millennium. As a matter of fact my Ryrie reference Bible comments thus on these verses, "Because of our union with Christ, we will be associated with Him in this judgement (during the millennium, see Matthew 19:28)". Consider also Luke 19:11-27 (read).

Is that unbelievable? Does it seem too much to believe? God has made His grace abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself or for His own benefit. The benefit He derives from this is that in the millennium, the Church will be His stewards or administrators of the world.

Now all of this has one great and major goal. It is that He, God, might head up all things

in Christ. One head for all people. The very goal our world is desperately striving toward now will be ultimately realized in Jesus Christ in the millennium. Our world is swiftly marching toward the goal of globalization. Man is seeking to bring all things under one head. This head we know from Scripture will be the antichrist. Man desperately wants to be ruler supreme. Man wants to be in charge. And man will achieve this goal but it will turn into one of the ugliest scenes this world has ever known.

We now are ready to consider the meaning of "all things" in verse 10. God has purposed in Himself that you and I, the true believers, should be the administrators of the millennial kingdom that He might head up all things by Jesus Christ. But what is meant by all things? We note first that it is all things both in heaven and on earth. I think noteworthy also is the fact that it is in the neuter gender, speaking of things (Read Colossians 1:15-20). This passage tells us that it includes things visible and invisible such as thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. It also indicates that the "all things" refers to all created things and thus includes vegetation. So we sing in Joy to the World, "No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground..." All things also includes the animal kingdom so we read in Isaiah 11, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the vipers den. The all things will also include mankind and mankind and angels, both fallen and good angels.

The millennium is the fulness of the times. It is the time when all rebellion and wrong will be entirely taken care of. This period will

finally end with Satan judged, the fallen angels judged and all unbelievers judged and delivered to their final and eternal place. This period will end to usher in the new heavens and the new earth. And the Church age believer has been chosen by God to be instrumental in bringing all this about. Unbelievable, right? Christ, the central theme of the Scriptures; Christ the central goal of the Christian; Christ, the epitomy of God's great love will be the One by whom all things will be headed up. I cannot describe for you the bliss that shall be ours for eternity. Glory to God!

God planned the mystery of His will, the Church age, with a purpose in mind. It was so that He would have qualified administrators for the fulness of the times so that He might head up all things in Christ. You see, you and I, every one who is a born again believer and thus a member of the body of Christ or the Church, have a grand and lofty purpose. A purpose of which we have seen only a small part this morning. Yes, you and I, as Christians, play a part in the eternal plan of God.

CONCL: In Ephesians 1:3 Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..." Well, one of those blessings is to be chosen by God, as a member of the body of Christ, to be administrators in the fulness of the times that God might head up all things in Christ.

I have noted that there are a number or people in this church who are going through a difficult time. May I encourage you this morning to continue to trust God. Let me encourage those in trial to read 1 Peter. Let me encourage you with Peter 4:12, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." At the second coming and on into the millennium the Lord's glory will be revealed in spectacular ways. And in

due season you will reap if you faint not. The trials we face here are, according to the Apostle Paul, not worthy to be weighed against the glory that lies before us! Push on dear pilgrim. You cannot do better than trust God. And in due season He has a place of honour for you.